# Blood Red Dreaming

A Raw and Bloody Bare Bones Guide to Play

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# How to Play

## Action Resolution

### Introduction

**One Psychonaut will take the role of the Storyteller**, and will set the scene and act out all of the other roles in the story. **The other Psychonauts are the protagonists.** And they must endeavor to enact the story encoded into the Incursion as best they can.

To do this, **the Storyteller will set challenges and put opponents and obstacles in their way. The Psychonauts in turn must narrate their way past** these obstacles and opponents.

### Overview

#### Basic Actions

You take action in the Shadowlands (the game world) the same way that you take action in the Bonelands ( the 'real' world). You do it. **In an incursion you take action through narrative, by narrating your part in the story**, rather than by physical exertion.

#### Unchecked Actions

**psychonauts may do anything in game that they are capable of doing in the real world, no resolution required.** If you can run a marathon or bench press 200 lbs or read Spanish in the real world, then you can do the same things in game. Period. Nothing else required.

#### Checked Actions

**If psychonauts wish do something else, then an action resolution is required.** For anything beyond the Psychonaut's capabilities, something they have never tried, or something completely foreign, then an action resolution is required. **The psychonauts must spend resources, cards from, their hands, vajra points or other story elements in order to hit the difficulty rating of the action. If they fail to meet the difficulty, the suffer the consequences of failure.**

When a psychonaut is confronted by a challenge that requires them to spend resources, the storyteller will present it as follows:

1. Description of the challenge (What is happening)
2. Difficulty level (Possibile, Impossible, Beyond the Impossible)
3. Consequence Levels (Mild, Ugly, Disastrous, Apocalyptic)

## Difficulty Levels

**Tasks are assigned difficulty level and score** based on how far beyond the psychonaut's current ability the attempted task is. The difficulty score is divided into 3 category levels: Possible, Impossible, Beyond the Impossible. **The storyteller does not tell the psychonauts the difficulty beyond those three descriptors.** Difficulty levels **1 through 5 are POSSIBLE**. Difficulty levels **6 through 15 are IMPOSSIBLE**. Difficulty levels **16 and above are BEYOND THE IMPOSSIBLE**.

Once the storyteller has told the psychonauts the category of difficulty, then **the exact level of difficulty is written down and placed face down**. The psychonaut(s) may then attempt the action by laying cards, spending points, and activating story elements.

## Consequences

The Storyteller will then **explain the Consequence level**, which is **either MILD (1), UGLY (2), DISASTROUS (3), or APOCALYPTIC (4)**. If a characters fails, then **the consequence is applied as a penalty for failure that relates in some way to the situation.** The penalty may be added to the difficulty of attempting the action again, say as in picking a lock. **The penalty is typically damage, but does not have to be damage if the Storyteller has a more appropriate idea in mind.** The penalty may be applied to the character's avatar as damage, say as in injuring oneself attempting to jump up over a wall. the penalty may be applied as enhanced difficulty to later actions, say as in setting off an alarm that makes subsequent stealth attempts more difficult.

**Storytellers may set Difficulty and Consequence levels as they see fit. A good rule for difficulty levels is to set difficulty levels to Impossible in most situations.** A wise Storyteller should typically provide Possible difficulty for clever solutions or cases where the Psychonauts are using skill in which they are highly skilled. Beyond the Impossible should be used cases where the Psychonauts are trying something absurdly risky or outlandish. **Regarding Consequence levels, a good rule is that in general a consequence should be no higher than the current act of the Incursion plus one.**

**Flash and Sizzle**
*preview*
psychonauts may choose to apply FOOLISH OPTIMISM to any action attempt where the consequence is not APOCALYPTIC. FOOLISH OPTIMISM, increases the Consequence level by one, and decreases the difficulty by one level (not one category, one level only).
If a psychonaut fails by more than two points, they suffer a consequence one level worse than they would otherwise have suffered.

## Opposed Actions

**If the action involves two individuals competing**: fighting, debating, playing chess, racing, etc... then the difficulty level is determined slightly differently. **The Storyteller will determine**, after discussion with the involved parties, **what the base difference in skill is** best estimated as being. **The person at a disadvantage experiences that disadvantage as a penalty.** The difficulty level is then the other individual's total value played on the action. **The consequence is still determined by the Storyteller.**

## Difficulty In Depth

Difficulty is a delicate balance both the Storyteller and the Psychonauts. **The Storyteller must gauge the difficulty level so that the Incursion is a challenge that requires real effort to successfully enact**, but which is a challenge which the Psychonauts can be trusted to complete successfully.

The Psychonauts must carefully gauge the challenge levels and bet their resources with care if they are to balance risk and reward and reach the end of the tale which they are enacting.

### Possible (1 to 5)

**Actions that are Possible are actions that are either within the Psychonaut's abilities but something they cannot yet do consistently,** or something beyond their current ability but which they might achieve through luck or chance.

### Impossible (6 to 15)

**Impossible actions are those which would be difficult even for somebody trained to do exactly that**, would be difficult for an expert in the field, or the equivalent of the first transAtlantic flight, the first 4 minute mile, etc…

Beyond the Impossible (15+)

BEYOND THE IMPOSSIBLE. **These are actions simply not physically possible** and could only happen in the Shadowlands.

Too Difficult to Attempt

NONE! **No task is too impossible in the Shadowlands! Storytellers should never tell a psychonaut that an action cannot be attempted.** After all, impossible is only the second category of difficulty in the Shadowlands!

## Consequence Levels in Depth

Things can always go wrong. **When a psychonaut fails an attempted action, then there are consequences.** The storyteller will tell a psychonaut the category of consequence that the psychonaut risks when planning an action. Certain actions taken by a psychonaut can alter the consequences of an action. And **a psychonaut may chose not to attempt an action if the consequence level presented by the Storyteller is higher than the psychonaut is willing to risk experiencing.**

**Importantly, the Storyteller does not tell the psychonaut the precise consequences.** Indeed, the Storyteller may not even determine the exact consequences until the attempt fails. **The important part of describing the consequences is that they move the story forward. A success and a failure both move the plot of the story towards the Showdown.** A failure will do so in a manner which puts the psychonauts increasingly at a disadvantage, but will still move the plot forward.

**There is also the possibility that the consequences will shatter the Aura of one or more psychonauts.** If that occurs, the plot still moves forward, but possibility with fewer psychonauts still active in the Incursion.

### Mild

- **Attempt fails Apply an increase to difficulty level of 1 to subsequent attempts.** Apply a penalty of 1 to subsequent attempts Apply a penalty of 1 to later related action attempts
- **Apply 1 point of damage to Avatar Aura** or other penalty

### Ugly

- **Attempt fails loudly and visibly Apply an increase to difficulty level on 2 to subsequent attempts.** Apply a penalty of 2 to subsequent attempts Apply a penalty of 2 to later related action attempts
- **Apply 2 point of damage to Avatar Aura** or other penalty

### Disastrous

- **Apply an increase to difficulty level on 3 to subsequent attempts Apply a penalty of 3 to subsequent attempts.** Apply a penalty of 3 to later related action attempts
- **Apply 3 point of damage to Avatar Aura** or other penalty

### Apocalyptic

- **Apply an increase to difficulty level on 4 to subsequent attempts.** Apply a penalty of 4 to later related action attempts

- **Apply 4 point of damage to Avatar Aura  or other penalty**

### Success in Depth

**As long as the Active psychonaut at least ties the difficulty score then the psychonauts have succeeded.** But the degree of success is determined by the degree by which the psychonauts surpass the difficulty score.

#### Success Types

**Amazing Success (Succeed by more than 3 points)**: Succeed and skip next challenge or generate positive Story Element.
**Normal Success (Succeed by at least one point)**: Succeed
**Problematic Success (Succeed by tie)**: Succeed but generate new challenge or drawback (Generally a Story Element)

### Flash and Sizzle

**Psychonauts can boost their Avatar's chances of success by taking short term bonuses in exchange for penalties down the road.** These take the form of four modifiers to actions: Foolish Optimism, Risky Actions, Bad Decisions, and Sacrifice Plays.

**Risky Actions**
Psychonauts may **add up to +3 on any action** by explaining how they taking some to boost their chances of success. **This becomes a Story Element card with an identical value as a penalty that the Storyteller may apply later** in a way that matches and/or relates to the risk taken. **Risky Actions may not be used on the Final Phase of the Incursion.**

**Bad Decisions**
Psychonauts may **transform a failed action into a Problematic Success in exchange for a Story Element that has an ongoing penalty affect** that lasts until the remainder of the session unless the reversal is applied. **Bad Decisions may not be used on the Final Phase of the Incursion.**

**Foolish Optimism**
Psychonauts may choose to apply Foolish Optimism to any action attempt where the consequence is not apocalyptic. Foolish Optimism **increases the Consequence level by one, and decreases the difficulty by 3 points** (not one category, three points only).

**Sacrifice Play**
psychonauts may **voluntarily shatter their Aura**- removing them from active gameplay for the remainder of the session- **in exchange for an amazing success on an action.**

## Action Types: Hero, Scoundrel, Villain, Mind, Body and Hands

**This is a story,** never forget that. And as such, **it follows story logic, not physical laws.** And as such, the **psychonauts can influence the outcome by calling upon the story in very direct ways**. **Psychonauts can double the value of a card that they play** (see detail in the Deck of Void Section for details) **if the card they play has an Action Type matching the action that they are attempting.**

**Actions can be defined in one of two ways, by their virtue, and by their method.** By virtue we mean whether the action would be considered **the action of a hero, a scoundrel or a villain.** There is no hard and fast set of tables for this.

If the psychonaut is matching their Avatar's method of resolving the action with the method listed on the card, then things are more straightforward. By method we mean that the action is considered to be **an achievement of mind or body or skill (hands)**. There are three methods defined: mind, body, and hands. Mind means that the method of resolution is primarily intellectual: involving thought, persuasion, charm, problem solving and so forth. Body means athletic performance, from feats of strength and endurance pain resistance and fasting. Hands mean learned skills, from automotive repair to juggling to swordplay.

**As you read this you may be noticing grey areas and overlap. Yes, that's fine- it's up to the psychonauts to convince the storyteller through their own storytelling why the method matches.** That's the point of this, to encourage storytelling not attempts to exploit loopholes and so forth.

**The psychonaut will have to argue through storytelling why an action matches the virtue or method listed** on the card that they are laying. If the storyteller agrees, then the value of the card is doubled for the attempted action. Both active and Supporting Psychonauts may make use of the Action Type doubling bonus.

**Virtue Action Types**
- Hero
- Scoundrel
- Villain

**Method Action Types**
- Mind
- Body

- Hands

**Virtue Actions**

**Heroic Actions**
The word Hero comes from an ancient Greek word with a meaning that roughly translates as defender. The Hero protects. The Hero saves. **The Hero lays down their own life for others, sacrifices for others.**

**Scoundrel Actions**
**The Scoundrel serves the greater good, but does so while profiting themselves.** They scheme and sneak, they break rules and fudge the truth. But they help the story nonetheless. Scoundrels profit themselves AS they help the story. If you are only profiting yourself, you are not a scoundrel.

**Villainous Actions**
**A villain seeks their own power and their own benefit, damn the consequences** and damn the lives of others. One does not need to be cruel or vindictive to be a villain. One must simply put one's own needs above all others.

**Virtue Summary**
**The Hero acts first for the cause. The Scoundrel makes the cause profitable for them. The Villain acts first for themselves.** Note that this is dependent upon what the cause is. If it seems like an obviously villainous character is acting in service first of a cause, and thus must be a hero, look at whether the cause they are serving itself meets the definition of villainous.

**Method Actions**

**Mind Actions**
**Mind Actions are actions where success is dependent upon the intelligence or clever thinking.** Mind actions are varied, the only constant is that success is dependent upon the quality of the thinking of the person attempting the access.

**Body Actions**
**Body Actions are actions where success is dependent upon the athleticism** of the being attempting the action. From feats of strength and agility, from acts of endurance and pain tolerance, Body actions are the actions of whole body.

**Hands Actions**
**Hands Actions are the actions of learned skills.** Repairing a car? Hacking a computer? Picking a Lock? Fighting a duel with Lightsabers? Practical skills that one learns through study and practise are the essence of the Hands Actions.

**Method Summary**
These summaries are fairly straight forward. **Mind Actions are the actions of thought. Body Actions are the actions of athleticism. Hands Actions are the actions of careful skill.**

## The Deck of Void

**Gameplay Resolution is done with a deck of cards rather than with dice.** A psychonaut's Avatar in the Shadowlands can do whatever the psychonaut themselves is physically capable of doing. **Anything beyond the capacity of the psychonaut requires the expenditure of cards to accomplish.** If they are unable to do the action in the real world, the Storyteller will define the Difficulty and Consequences as listed in that Section.

**The psychonaut will then attempt to have their Avatar resolve the action. This can be accomplished by spending Vajra, using Story Elements in play or playing Cards from their hand.** All of this is a guideline remember, and always be asking, what makes a better story.

**The Deck of Void is a 72 card deck. Every card has a value between 4 and 0.** Each card is assigned an Action type as well as listed in that Section: Hero, Scoundrel, Villain, Mind, Body, or Hands.

### Card Values

There are six cards with a value of four, the highest value in game and thus the rarest. There are twelve cards with a value of three, eighteen cards with a value of two, and twenty four cards with a value of one.

All the cards with a value between four and one have a denizen of the Shadowlands depicted on them. There are twelve value zero cards, divided into two groups based on what they depict. Six cards depict Realms in the Shadowlands. Six Card depict the mythic seasons.

**Cards with a value between four and one can be laid to boost the chances of success.**

Psychnoauts may play cards on any attempted action, even if it is not their attempt. **The Active psychonaut lays cards first. Supporting psychonauts lay cards during the support phase**, later in the Action Resolution Phase.

**Cards with a value of zero nullify all card bonuses** (and only card bonuses) played by the storyteller or opposing psychonaut prior to the zero value card being played.

This can be used against another psychonaut, who may elect to spend more cards to counter the effect. **If played against a Denizen or other challenge presented by the Storyteller, then the single card played by the Storyteller is negated and no more cards will be laid by the Storyteller** for that action. **A value zero card that is played which matches the action type (hero, scoundrel, villain, mind, body, hands) nullifies the cards already played, and halves the difficulty**- provided the psychonaut can describe in story what is done to make this occur.

### Hand Size, Card Recovery, Drawing with an Empty Hand

**The hand size is five cards. On an Amazing Success, the active psychonaut**(s) only, not assisting psychonauts, **may draw 2 cards** up to a full five cards. **On a Normal Success, the psychonaut draws 1 card** or to a full hand. **On a problematic Success, the psychonaut draws no cards.**

**If a psychonaut fails, they regain no cards.** After the Action Resolution is complete, the Psychonauts may spend vajra to draw new cards, two vajra per one card- up to their maximum hand size. A Psychonaut may also discard 2 cards to draw 1 new card.

**If a psychonaut has no cards in hand, they may always draw a single card**- face down- to boost an action resolution attempt. In this case a zero is applied towards the psychonaut avatar's own total value (giving no boost). **A psychonaut may draw appropriate cards should they succeed in such an attempt.** Other Psychonauts may bolster an active psychonaut who must draw from the deck by laying cards of their own as normal.

## Resolving Action: Step By Step

**Step One**: The Scene is Set and Explained

- Scene is **explained**
- The **Challenge level is written down** and placed face down
- Challenge and Consequence **hints are given**

**Step Two**: psychonauts commit their play

- Active psychonaut **lay down their cards**
- Active psychonaut **commits any Vajra** they wish initially
- Active psychonaut decide if they wish to **use any magick or artifact or similar**
- **Support psychonauts may not commit anything** at this time

**Step Three**: Storyteller draws card face up

- Card's **value is noted**
- Storyteller privately **notes new total difficulty** level

**Step Four**: psychonauts whether or not to bolster

- **Support psychonauts may now elect to commit cards or Vajra** to bolster
- Support psychonauts may not also elect to use Magick or artifact or similar
- **Active psychonaut may not bolster**

**Step Five**: Difficulty level is revealed, total difficulty is added up.

- **Success or Failure** Type is determined.
- **Damage can be mitigated here** by spending additional cards needed to bring the psychonaut's score up to the level of problematic success. This does not cause the attempt to succeed.
- **Consequences are assessed**.

**Step Six**: Success or Failure Resolution

- **If successful. Note degree of Success**. Storyteller provided description of results
    - If Success is Amazing, Storyteller includes explanation of additional success skipped
    - If Success if Problematic, Storyteller adds new Story Element
- **If a failure. Damage to Aura is applied.**
    - Additional complications are noted and described by Storyteller
- **If Aura Shatters Supporting psychonauts may attempt to reinforce** the broken Aura by
    - Committing Vajra
    - Using relevant artifacts, magick or similar.

# The Fiction Suit

## Introduction

Walking naked through the Shadowlands is dangerous to psychonauts. And so the Psychnonaut must build themselves a Fiction Suit.

## Building a Fiction Suit

### War Name

First, **you need a War Name**. Traditional Cultures around the world typically give children new names as they reach adulthood. These names signal their transformation into something new, something other than then children they were. This is the same thing. **The War Name you chose symbolizes your transition into a psychonaut and your journey into the depths of the Shadowlands. War Names can be changed between Incursions with no penalty.**

### Avatar

It bears repeating that **your physical appearance in the Shadowlands matches your physical appearance when you start the Incursion. This is called your Avatar.**

Your Fiction Suit also includes the story about who you wish to become. One of the goals of Blood Red Dreaming is Self Improvement. It is for this reason that **the game uses your real life capabilities to measure what you can do in game, and for this reason that the game uses real world activity to generate special abilities in game. So give yourself a mission. How will you be epic?** What will you do to write yourself into the legends of culture and leave your mark for eternity? **This is not optional. What is your epic goal? What cause greater than yourself are you fighting to achieve?** Humans need a cause to give them meaning. And so you must choose yours. You will find yourself confronting a great many dark esoteric ideas in the depths of the Shadowlands, a mission is armor. So clothe yourself in the strongest armor which you can find. **You can change your mission at any time with no penalty.**

### Your Glyph

**Empowering your avatar is a glyph that you will choose to sync to your avatar at the start of any incursion.** As with your War name, **a glyph can be changed between incursions.** Psychonauts can **choose from a series of common glyphs or design one of their own.**

A handmade glyph will provide a bonus of +2 to a method action type (Body, Mind or Hands) and a -2 to another method action type, this affects all appropriate actions for the duration of the incursion and does stack with other modifiers.

### Treaty Glyphs

**The Grey Glyph**: The glyph of Stone Crack Green Peoples, the weeds and invasive plants who live at the Margins of the the City of Glass. The Grey Glyph provides no bonuses or negatives and is ideal for a new player or a player comfortable with their own abilities.

**The Deep Sea Glyph**: The Glyph of the Water Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to Mind and a -1 to Hands.

**The Leaf Glyph**: The Glyph of the One Leaf Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to Mind and a -1 to Body.

**The Sunset Glyph**: The Glyph of the Winter Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to hands and a -1 to Mind.

**The Sunrise Glyph**: The Glyph of the Blade Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to Body and a -1 to Hands.

**The Spark Glyph**: The Glyph of the Two Leaf Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to Hands and a -1 to Body.

**The Crimson Glyph**:  The Glyph of the Village treaty Green Peoples. Provides a +1 to Body and a -1 to Mind.

## Other Aspects of the Fiction Suit

You Fiction Suit will acquire a great many additional features and powers as you progress on your journey, but you can learn about those as they become relevant. **For the moment, choose a War Name and a Glyph, Choose a Mission, and be aware that you are your own Avatar.**

# Manifesting in the Shadowlands

**When the Incursion starts, you will have only what you have brought with you into the Shadowlands, and the things permanently attuned to your Avatar.** As this will be your first, you will have nothing attuned. This means that **you will carry only a mental construct of your body- your Fiction Suit, your Avatar, and the clothes and items which you have on your person when the Incursion starts.**

## Avatars

**Your Avatar is the mental image of yourself which you project into the depths of the Shadowlands** to seek out pieces of the story and to weave your name into those stories in a quest to make yourself immortal, **to make yourself a legend.**

**Your Avatar looks like you on your best day.** Not a younger you, or a you when you were in peak fitness. Your Avatar looks like you now, but you on your best day. You are able to do in the Shadowlands what you are able to do in the real world (in the Bonelands).

**There is some room for adjustment here. Incursion groups are encouraged to discuss how they wish to approach the capabilities of Avatars with mobility issues or other physical challenges** such as paraplegia, blindness, etcetera. This decision should be put first to the individuals with such challenges. They may prefer to play with their condition accurate represented, for a variety of personal reasons. Or they may prefer to play with an Avatar that is more free and capable than they are here in the Shallows. The rest of the Incursion Group should decide whether any of this seems unreasonable; **keeping in mind that the goals of the game are to tell a good story, to inspire the people playing, and to have fun.**

**Your clothing and small items on your person will also form a part of your Avatar. The things in your pocket and so forth. Larger items, such as a camping backpack full of gear, can be brought into the Shadowland during Incursions, but require special procedures not explained here.** The Storyteller is free to veto any items which seem to large to fall into the above description.

## Aura

**When the psychonauts begin an Incursion, they begin by investing their Avatars with Vajra** (see that Section) that they have accumulated through work done between sessions. **The Aura is the Avatar's ability to remain corporeal within the Shadowlands.** For the first

Incursion, the Vajra required has been provided by an unknown outside source. This is a one time benefit. After the first Incursion, **psychonauts will need to use the Crescent Sun forms to record their vajra accumulation**.

**If a psychonaut's Aura shatters then their Avatar is expelled from the Shadowlands, and they are limited to passive assistance for the remainder of the session.** A psychonaut who achieves a mythic goal in a session regains all invested Vajra. A psychonaut who survives the session, but does not achieve a mythic goal gains no Vajra back. A psychonaut whose Aura shatters loses all invested Vajra.

## Investing your Aura

### Travel Costs

**When psychonauts begin any incursion** into the Shadowlands they must spend Vajra. **They must spend one Vajra of any type to enter the Shadowlands in the Ring or at any location in another Realm for which they have visited the Bonelands counterpart in the last lunar month.** To enter **anywhere else, at least one psychonaut must have the key to that Realm, and they must spend two vajra of any type.** This Vajra is not retained, being expended in the using.

### Betting Vajra

After that **psychonauts determine how much vajra of each type they wish to take with them into the Shadowlands. The vajra types are kept separate, but psychonauts may invest as much of their vajra as they like**. Any Vajra not invested may not be used in the game.

### Maintaining your Aura

**An Aura has three states:** Stable, Weakened, and Cracked. An Aura begins each session Stable. When a psychonaut takes Aura damage, they can burn Aether Vajra to prevent the Aura from dropping states. **If a psychonaut cannot absorb Aura damage, then each point of unabsorbed Aura Damage reduces the Avatar's Aura by a Single State.**

**Any failed actions can potentially cause damage to the aura.** Failure to save a dying inhabitant of Arcadia? Lose a debate in the Tax Collector’s Guild hall? Get lost in the Painted Labyrinth? All of these could shatter your Aura.

# Death in the Shadowlands

## Introduction

**Psychonauts have a saying, "You live in the Shadowlands. You die in the Bonelands."** This points to a truism, death is a slap on the wrist in the depths of the Shadowlands. **When a psychonaut 'dies' in the Shadowlands, what they really mean is that their Aura shattered and they were unable to maintain their Avatar and that it was expelled from the deep Shadowlands.**

**A psychonaut might 'die' several Incursions in a row. They will lose a little bit, the energy expended to enter the Incursion, and those things accumulated in that Incursion.** A psychonaut whose Aura shatters is not even entirely out of the action for that Incursion and may still assist the Incursion Team in several ways discussed later.

## Your Guide to Dying in the Field

The psychonaut's avatar is held together by his aura. As the Shadowlands is the world of stories, one can die in a great many ways beyond the typical. Any conflict, from verbal to physical can run the risk of breaking a psychonaut's aura.

### Mitigating Damage to an Aura

When a Psychonaut fails an action attempt, and when the consequences would shatter the aura, **the Psychonaut can burn Cards or Vajra to prevent the consequences.** Lacking Cards or Vajra to burn, the psychonaut's party may also burn Cards or Vajra to prevent the shattering.

When spending Vajra, **one Vajra point must be spent for each level of damage to the Aura which the psychonaut wishes to prevent.** This expenditure of Vajra does not turn the loss into a success, it simply prevents some or all of the consequences. Vajra can only spent to mitigate damage if the Aura was not irreversibly shattered.

**Mitigation of damage with cards, requires the psychonauts to lay enough cards to transform the value of the failed attempt into a problematic success.** This does not render the attempt a sucess, as with spending Vajra. Spending cards technically occurs before the

damage is received and thus can be used even if the consequences would result in the aura being irreversibly shattered. And again, this is because Cards are used to mitigate the consequence of failure, and Vajra is used to mitigate damage now received.

However, **psychonauts may choose to prevent only some of the damage when spending Vajra. When spending cards to mitigate the damage, the psychonaut must spend enough points via cards to reach a problematic success.** Mitigating damage via card placement mitigates all damage from the failure, but as with Vajra, this does not prevent the action attempt from being a failure.

### When Auras Break

**Your Avatar is the space suit and life support system keeping your alive and sane in the depths of the Shadowlands. Your Aura is your shields keeping your Aura safe.** Think of your Aura like the shields in Star Trek. If a psychonaut fails an action check, their Aura may risk taking damage, and may fail. **Aura condition types divide into three types: Weakened, Cracked, and Shattered.**

### Aura Conditions

**Stable (3)**

The Aura is fine. It's fine. Don't stress.

**Weakened (2)**

A weakened Aura is still able to protect the Psychonaut, but **the Avatar is not perfectly synced to the Psychonaut and the Psychonaut no longer has perfect control** of the Avatar. When an Aura shimmers and becomes WEAKENED, **the Psychonaut suffers -1 to Action Resolution Attempts.**

**Cracked (1)**

A cracked Aura is leaking a psychonaut's Avatar all across the Shadowlands. **The Psychonaut will have substantial difficulty controlling their avatar as the aura shudders under the strain.** When an Aura becomes CRACKED, **the psychonaut suffers -2 to Action Resolution Attempts.** Additionally, the shock of feeling their Aura crack, forces **the psychonaut to lose their next action, which must be spent to reconstitute Aura.**

**Shattered (0)**

A Shattered Aura means that **the Psychonaut's Avatar is expelled from the Incursion**. When an Aura Shatters, the shattering is either reversible or irreversible. **If an Aura has not been shattered irreversibly, then the Psychonaut and their allies can spend cards or vajra to attempt to reconstitute the Aura.** Otherwise, the damage is too sudden and too great and the Avatar is expelled back to the Shallows, and **the Psychonaut is limited to passive assistance** for the remainder of the Incursion.

### A Note Regarding Vajra

**Much of the game of Blood Red Dreaming is dependent upon the accumulation and expenditure of Vajra.** If you have played any video game with an energy meter, then you will have some idea what Vajra is. **Vajra is accumulated by doing useful things in your daily life. Vajra is spent in activating Incursions and in attempting actions during Incursions.**

Psychonauts on their early adventures will not have access to Vajra, and so this section is abridged here as it is not yet necessary. Just keep in mind that this is a big part of the game that will open up as you go along.

**On any incursion after a Psychonaut's first, they must invest at least one Vajra to enact the Incursion** (we talked about this earlier, read that section for details). So after playing their first Incursion, **a psychonaut should obtain the Crescent Sun First Circle Guide** in order to learn how to obtain the most basic Ether Vajra to enact Incursions.

## Enacting an Incursion

**Incursions are the symbolic representations of mythology and stories**, the scaffolding of the Shadowlands. **Incursions break apart into a three act structure like a theatrical play.** The acts are broken into multiple phases. **Every action resolution attempt moves the Incursions forward to the next phase.**

The Storyteller can vary the number of Phases or even the Number of Acts, but below is a typical Act/Phase structure.

### Three Acts

#### The Bazaar

(2 Scenes)

- Hook. 1 phase
- Line. 1 phase

### The Pursuit

(3 Scenes)

- Paper. 2 phases.
- Scissors. 2 phases.
- Rock. 2 phases

### The Finale

(1 Scene)

- Confrontation. 4 phases.

## The Bazaar

T**he Storyteller should set the tone here.** Provide an immediate sensory experience to the Psychonauts. **The psychonauts should attempt to assess the goals of the incursion.**

### Scene 1

#### The Hook

In the first scene, the storyteller will provide a **quest giver to provide the story hook to the psychonauts**. The Hook provided should be shocking and urgent and demand action from the psychonauts with clear and dire consequences presented both implicitly and explicitly. For example, a droid with a hidden message from a princess begging for help (Star Wars: A New Hope), a pregnant and bleeding woman who runs past the heroes while a pair of thugs follow with guns (Shoot ‘Em Up), or Alien Motherships appear over all major cities in the world (Independence Day).

That said, the Call knows where you live. The Shadowlands is the world of stories. And in the depths of the Shadowlands, the story is very powerful. And psychonauts who try to sabotage the story will find that the storyteller and its defenders will respond aggressively. The story is alive and intelligent and doesn’t like smart asses. That said, the story loves a twist, the story loves a surprise, the story loves a subverted trope- so be careful.

### Scene 2

#### The Line

And so, following the Hook, the Storyteller will then tie the Hook character to one of the Pursuit scenes: paper, scissors, or rock. The Hook character will also point out the other two Pursuit scenes, either as possible help or as dangerous complications.

The Storyteller will have the Hook character here make a direct request for help from the Psychonauts.

## The Pursuit

#### Rock, Paper, Scissors

**Three scenes: rock, paper, and scissors- each with two phases. Solving one of the scenes will unlock the solution to the matching scene, and complicates the other scene.** As an example, solving the paper scene will unlock the rock scene and complicate the scissors scene.

The Storyteller then moves one or both of the phases from the scene aided to the scene complicated. This will either completely resolve the scene or leave it with a single phase to resolve. And will result on the complicated scene having either a total of three of four scenes. The phases should relate to the scene they were taken from if possible, as complications spill over into other scenes.

Each scene has three possible phases, each of which can activate first. The Scene itself will include only two of the phases based on how the psychonauts start and proceed through the scene.

**Remember that every action taken and every result achieved by (or imposed upon) the Psychonauts should move them towards the Showdown. This does not necessary have to be a good thing.** But every interim event, good or bad, helpful to the Psychonauts or their adversaries, should move the Psychonauts closer to a final confrontation. Nothing should stop the action or roadblock the action, instead the story should move closer to its conclusion. Every failure or fumble by the Psychonauts allow the opposing forces to advance their own agendas. **No matter how bad things get, if some of the Psychonauts still have an intact Aura, then the story should move towards a conclusion- to the Showdown.**

# The Showdown

## The Finale

**The Showdown is the finale, and consists of a single scene with four phases. By the end of the four phases the Incursion and its story are complete.** If the Psychonauts fail all four phases of the Showdown, but some manage to survive all the consequences, then the Storyteller needs to find a way to resolve the Incursion in the Psychonauts' favor. **Reaching the end of the Incursion means the Psychonauts have either survived or not. But obviously simply surviving will not produce as epic as victory as actually triumphing into the Showdown.**

And the more tenuous the survival, the less dignified the victory, and the more outside interference will play a role in the Psychonaut's survival.

# Tools

Every incursion should include 3 Shadow tools, the gadget the compass and the map. All such tools are temporary, and do not persist past the end of the incursion. More details on the shadow tools can be found in the appropriate section in the included Incursion: into the ring.

## Gadget

**Gadgets are tools that help navigate or bypass or defeat story challenges** specific to the Incursion.

## Compass

Compasses are tools, not necessarily an actual compass, which **points the Psychonauts towards a key point of the Incursion.**

## Map

**Maps are tools that allow the Psychonauts to find locations within the Incursion.** Where the Compass points to story points, the Map points towards locations.

## Reward

**Incursions will, if successfully enacted, result in the Psychonauts receiving a Reward. Rewards may be permanent or consumable in some manner.** For example, favors owed by denizens of the Shadowlands are as popular in Incursions as they are in Fairy Tales. Storytellers can also provide Vajra as rewards. And introductions to other denizens can also be provided as a reward. Many denizens especially the Others are dangerous if not addressed properly. Depending upon the mindset of interest of the Psychonauts themselves, the Storyteller could also conceivably provide Lore and Mythos information as a reward.

NOW GO FIND SOMEBODY

WITH A COPY OF THE STORYTELLER GUIDE

AND START AN INCURSION